

## "OLD SERIOUS."

THE "pepper-box" was a little octagonal house about six feet in diameter and eight feet in height with a conical roof. In one of the eight sides was a little door with a window in the top of it, and in the other six sides there were small windows. The pepper box was furnished with one comfortable leather covered arm-chair, and the curious little building stood in a railroad yard amidst a perfect network of switches and turnouts, and was placed there to shelter the man who watched the "know-nothing" or crossing where two railroads intercept each other at right angles.

The crossings of which I now write were in the railroad yard of a large manufacturing city and railroad centre where nearly every foot of land, with the exception of this little triangular spot of ground where the "pepper-box" stood, was covered with iron rails. One would naturally think it to be a very confusing place to be in. The man in the pepper-box was obliged to keep a level head on his shoulders or he would be likely to make a mistake in regard to the time that one of the numerous trains was due, and a miscalculation of half a minute meant more or less destruction of life and property. Or, if he was not constantly on the lookout and alert, when he stepped outside he was liable to be run over and cut to pieces by the regular or switching trains.

Paul Serus, the pepper-box man, called "Old Serious" by the railroad "boys," was an object of interest to every one of the scores of employees on the several roads, who passed and repassed his close quarters every day. He had never been seen or heard of by any of them until, dusty and travel-worn he walked into passenger station one day in a half-intoxicated condition and took the cars for New York.

He refused to show his ticket or to pay his fare, so the conductor giving a pull to the bell rope to have the train slowed up, pitched the poor fellow off—rather too unceremoniously it was thought—and left him lying on the ground in a half dozed, half stunned condition. Before he regained consciousness and was able to get up, another train came along and ran over and cut off one of his feet that was lying across the rail.

There was quite an ado made over the affair. The conductor was blamed for not bringing the train to a stop before he put the man off, and for leaving him partly on the track. The former was suspended indefinitely—there had been many complaints entered against him before in the superintendent's office—and the poor victim was carried to the city hospital, where the superintendent of the road, a very kind-hearted man, himself went to see that he was well cared for.

He became interested in the patient, Paul Serus, and called to see him more than once, and promised him a job as soon as he should be well enough to take it, on the condition, however, that he should sign the pledge. The wounded man promised faithfully to do so, and while his mutilated stump of an ankle was healing he had time to get thoroughly sobered, to profit by the somewhat dismal retrospect of his life and to make plans for a useful, honorable future.

"This is the first time I have been completely sobered for years," he said to the surgeon, who was very attentive and kind to him. "I feel exactly as if I had been away from my true self all this dreadful time, and had just got back into my old body again—as I used to be when I was somebody in the world."

As soon as poor Paul was able to hobble about on a crutch, the whole-souled railroad superintendent came to the hospital and had a long interview with the surgeon in regard to him. There was such a quiet dignity about the man, such native goodness of heart, honesty in action and purpose, that these two gentlemen had made up their minds not to turn the cripple patient out upon the world when he should have recovered, but on the other hand to do something for him.

"You may give him a situation where there is some responsibility; where he will have something to take up his mind constantly," said the good surgeon.

"The 'pepper-box' down in our yard is the liveliest place I know of for a green hand," said the superintendent.—"I will give him the day watch there."

And so he did, telling big Mike, the old and faithful switchman on a side track near by, to keep a sharp watch upon him, however.

"There's not a man on the road, sir, as needs less watchin' than Old Serious," reported old Mike at the end of the month, "he just moinds his own business."

One day as the superintendent of the road was walking in the yard, Paul said to him:

"I can do the day and night work both just as well if you will increase

my pay and let me build an addition to my house in the shape of a dry goods box in which I can stretch myself out between trains at night; there's room for it in the triangle. Downing, the night watch, told me to-day that he must throw up his job, his rheumatism had got such a hold upon him. Besides, I can easily wake up at any given time at night; I was noted in the army for that when on guard and picket duty."

"Very well," replied the superintendent, "I am willing you should try it. Downing spoke to me just now about giving up his job."

In this case little Mike, the night watchman, was instructed to have an eye out to see that Paul kept the right signal lights at his window. So Paul made a queer addition to the pepper-box. The railroad boys called it Old Serious' chapel and made a great deal of fun of him in his Bible reading. It came to be quite the thing to get up stories about the poor man. Some said he was a murderer hiding from justice, others said he was an escaped burglar, and at last, as the months went, and Paul remained faithful and alert at his post, they all settled down to the belief that he was a miser, that in the estimation of the free-hearted road hands was the worst character conceivable.

Somebody started the report that the pepper-box man buried his wages each month under the floor of his domicile; that he boarded himself on crackers and codfish, and never had a decent meal, nor a smoke, nor a chew. They did not say he never took a drink, for they knew he could not keep his job in that event, and many of them were teetotalers themselves.

One moonlight night in autumn a company of the hands who had come in on the different trains, thinking to have some fun by frightening "Old Serious," marched in Indian file from the freight depot up the track to the pepper-box, and encircling the funny little structure, looked in at the windows.

The blood-red signal was burning brightly, casting a lurid glow on the premises. The poor cripple was fast asleep on the floor, wrapped in a blanket and his feet stretched out through the little aperture in the wall into the dry goods box. A few pieces of charcoal were faintly glowing in an old iron kettle over which, in a tin pail, some kind of broth was simmering.

The hands expressed their indignation at his miserly habits in low whispers, and presently Bill Edison shouted:

"Get up, old pinch-penny, and hand over enough of your hoard to buy us all a hot supper and the cigars for the crowd."

"Yes," said another, "shell out or we'll carry you up here a piece and throw you down the cliff into the river, and poke you over the falls."

The crippled watchman, not showing the least fright, incensed the whole company into roundly abusing and insulting "Old Serious."

He slowly raised himself up, opened the door of his domicile and said:

"Boys, I would invite you in were not my quarters so circumscribed. Perhaps you will sit down on the dry sand while I tell you a bit of a story."

"For many years I have been estranged from home and friends and family by drink. I will not weary you with the details of my life. I will simply say that at the time my foot was cut off I had not seen my wife and children for five years. As soon as I was able to write, I sent my wife a letter telling her that I was trying to be a man again, and asking her if she would live with me. She immediately replied that she would gladly do so, providing I could keep my resolution to let liquor alone.—I don't suppose she had much faith in me at first, but I have written to her every week, and I can see by her letters to me that there is a new and growing hope springing up in her heart."

"Now, there is not a man among you who will wonder why I look 'serious,' or that I do double duty here, although it does wear on me a little. But I get extra pay, and have had no time to fall into temptation. You will now see the reason why I live so cheaply is to save money enough to bring my family half way across the continent before the snow falls, that they and I may have a home together once more."

"Hurrah for 'Old Serious,' hurrah for Mr. Serus," shouted Bill Edison, correcting himself: "I say, boys, pay day was yesterday, and we've all got some money by us; let's take up a collection, and pulling off his grimy cap, he passed it round, getting generous contributions from all hands. Then, turning his own greasy pockets inside out, and shaking them in a droll way over the cap, he said, "There, comrade, take that; and do you see that little white cottage up there on the cliff?—It's empty. Tom Reynolds moved up to the other end of the road to-day. It's handy to your job: just the thing. I'll see about it myself as soon as it's daylight. You send for them folks o' yourn right off, and if you haint got money

enough yet to pay the bills, we fellows will see that it's all right."

Paul's family arrived in due time, and every one of those wild but kind-hearted railroad "boys" had a hand in setting them to housekeeping. And as they point to that little "pepper-box" to this day, and tell this simple story they say that Paul Serus is a hero, and that somehow they feel as if they owned a share of him, and in his happy, thrifty family living in the neat little white cottage on the cliff above the crossing.

## "Old Sam Houston."

ONE of the most eccentric characters of the old United States Senate was General Sam Houston, of Texas. His character harmonized with his life, which had been one of strange adventure.

He had served as a soldier in the war of 1812, as Governor of Tennessee, as an Indian chief while an exile among the Cherokees, and as commander-in-chief of the Texan army. He was victor on the field of San Jacinto, and became the first president of the republic of Texas. In the streets of Washington, his tall figure—he is six feet and a half in height—and singular dress attracted attention. On his head he wore a Mexican sombrero, while a bright-colored blanket was thrown negligently over his shoulder. His coat and pants, of the richest black broadcloth, set off a unique vest made of tiger skin.

In the Senate chamber he would set all day whittling, with a pile soft wood and a basket to hold the shavings by his side. Young ladies and children were quite anxious to secure the hearts, darts, crosses and other devices which the Senatorial whittler made. Around his bedroom at the hotel hung several printed cards, on which were inscribed, "My bedtime is nine o'clock."

As a stump speaker, the backwoodsmen, who called him "Old Sam," thought he had no equal. He had a melodious voice, excelled as a teller of anecdotes, and was fond—though he spoke pure English—of dropping into the *patois* of his frontier audiences. In 1857, the Legislature of Texas refused to re-elect him Senator because he voted against the Kansas Nebraska bill. He ran for Governor. In one of his speeches during the excited canvass, he said:

"But, fellow citizens, you whopped me good. Now, if I donne wrong, you have had your satisfaction: and if I donne wrong, God knows I forgive you."

The backwoodsmen cheered the man who could talk to them in their own lingo, and Houston was re-elected by an overwhelming majority.

While Houston was a clerk in a country store in Tennessee, the war of 1812 broke out and he at once enlisted. The style in which he did so was characteristic. A drummer and fife paraded the streets of the town, headed by a sergeant. Silver dollars were placed on the head of a drum, and a volunteer stepped up and took a dollar which was his bounty and the sign of enlistment.—Houston took his dollar and at once marched, with other recruits against the Creek Indians.

His friends had sufficient influence to procure him an ensign's commission.—At the battle of the "Horse Shoe," he mounted the Indian fort, colors in hand, a barbed arrow pierced his thigh. Houston ordered a soldier to pull it out. The man tried and failed.

"If you don't pull it out," exclaimed Houston, drawing his pistol, "I will shoot you!"

The man gave a strong pull and out came the arrow, leaving a lacerated wound. As soon as it was dressed he rushed out again into the fight, whence he was carried out with two balls in his right shoulder.

## A Monkey at Church.

Grandfather Allen was a Scotch minister, a grand good man, and emphatic in his gestures and motions. He had a pet monkey, Tib, an intelligent creature, of whom he thought a great deal. Tib on his part loved his master so, that like Mary's little lamb, he followed wherever he went. So on Sunday he was shut in the house and chained. Of course Tib did not at all approve, and on one memorable Sunday he unfastened his chain, slipped out of the house and stole away to the kirk, where he hid on the sounding-board directly over the minister's head. He behaved quietly until the sermon began. Then he moved to the edge of the board where he could see his master. Tib looked at the earnest preacher with great interest, and soon began to mimic the gestures. As he was in full view of the congregation the effect was ridiculous enough, and soon even the sober grown folks shook with suppressed laughter, while the little folks couldn't suppress theirs at all. The minister, who couldn't see master Tib, felt very indignant, and rebuked his people sharply, and the laughter continued. Then Grandfather, angry and excited, raised his voice and gesticulated more violently, and the

monkey, watching from above, imitated him with great spirit and liveliness, until one simultaneous shout burst from the people and resounded through the kirk. Amazed and scandalized at this extraordinary behavior, Grandfather paused a moment, and some one directed his attention to the cause of the disturbance; and when he saw Master Tib perched above him and playing minister in such a comical and ridiculous way, he joined in the laugh himself. Poor Tib, however, was taken in dis-grace and good care was taken that he never went to church again."

## A Westfield, Massachusetts, Excitement.

Westfield, Mass., is considerably excited over an alleged case of poisoning. Mrs. David Drake being suspected of murdering her stepdaughter Etta, a young woman of 17 years. The latter died on Friday at her brother's residence, in Pochassic street, where she had been living for about four weeks, after leaving her home, it is said, because she feared for her life, her mother's actions being strange and unaccountable.

Once the girl awoke in her sleep and found Mrs. Drake bending over her, while the air was filled with a suspicious odor of ether. At another time, when she heard her mother coming in the night, she jumped out of a window without awaiting further developments and fled to her brother's house. Miss Etta evidently had not had any poisons given to her for four weeks, but some of her friends think death resulted from slow poison administered before she left home. Her body was examined by Medical Examiner Waterman and several other physicians, who found no cause for natural death, and the stomach and other portions were removed for an analysis.

Mrs. Drake, the suspected murderess is a strong person, accused of opium eating and fits of insanity, and is now living with her third husband. Her first and second husbands are said to have died mysteriously, and a son by her first husband is reported to have been found dead in bed, after retiring in perfect health, the woman having learned that his presence would be an obstacle to her second marriage.

## A Queer Lawsuit.

In the Caharrus (N. C.) court a singular lawsuit was recently brought. A few months ago John M. Ingraham was applied to for work by John Forst. He told the applicant that he had nothing for him to do, but he would give him \$12,000 for the hides of 6,000 lizards.—Ingraham giving the man his note for that amount. Forst, with his wife and five children, at one started for the mountains. There they established themselves in camp and began a war upon the reptiles. The result of their first day's effort was so encouraging that they worked with renewed energy, and within twenty days had the 6,000 lizard hides. The family marched into town last week and offered the reptile skins to Ingraham, and were told that his offer was only a jest.

## A Little Girl's Unfortunate Speech.

A secret service operative in the West makes mention of a case in which a little girl unwittingly caused the arrest of her father for counterfeiting. On her way to school a few mornings ago she stopped at a confectioner's to buy five cents' worth of candy. She handed the proprietor a nickel. He examined it and said he did not think it was good.—"Oh, I know it is," she exclaimed innocently, "because papa made it. Papa makes lots just like that." Upon that information the man's premises were searched and implements for counterfeiting and counterfeit coin were found in large quantities. The man was arrested.

## Strange Freak of a Maniac.

A strange freak of a maniac occurred in South Canaan, Ct., recently. William Blodgett, who has been deranged more or less for the last ten years, and has been confined in the Middletown asylum, procured a shovel and proceeded to the cemetery, with the design of "resurrecting" his brother Milan, buried there five years ago. He dug up the coffin and opened it, revealing the skeleton. He then went to Thomas Bailey's, a short distance off, and procured a pitcher of milk, by the application of which the "resurrection" was to be accomplished, and remained all night, bathing the relics with the fluid. He was found in the morning, talking incoherently.

## An Original Campaigner.

Blaton Duncan has started a circus which in some respects eclipses Butler's. He is traveling over the Congressional district in Kentucky, where he is the Greenback candidate, with a wagon which is equipped with a desk, a small cannon and some locomotive headlights. When he reaches a place where he wishes to speak, he fires off his cannon, illuminates, and looses his chin upon the assembled crowd. Thus far no one has been hurt by either the cannon or the chin.

## VEGETINE.

REV. J. P. LUDLOW, WRITES:  
178 Baltic Street Brooklyn, N. Y., Nov. 14, 1878.  
H. H. Stevens, Esq.  
Dear Sir,—From personal benefit received by its use, as well as from personal knowledge of those whose cures thereby seemed almost miraculous, I can most heartily and sincerely recommend the VEGETINE for the complaints which it is claimed to cure.

JAMES LUDLOW,  
Late Pastor Calvary Church,  
Sacramento, Cal.

## VEGETINE.

SHE RESTS WELL.

South Poland, Me., Oct. 11, 1878.  
Mr. H. H. Stevens,  
Dear Sir,—I have been sick two years with the liver complaint, and during that time have taken a great many different medicines, but none of them did me any good. I was restless nights, and had no appetite. Since taking the VEGETINE I rest well and relish my food. Can recommend the VEGETINE for what it has done for me.—  
Yours respectfully,  
MRS. ALBERT RICKER.

Witness of the above,  
MR. GEORGE M. VAUGHAN,  
Medford, Mass.

## VEGETINE.

GOOD FOR THE CHILDREN.

Boston Home, 11 Tyler Street,  
Boston, April, 1876.

H. H. Stevens,  
Dear Sir,—We feel that the children in our home have been greatly benefited by the VEGETINE you have so kindly given us from time to time, especially those troubled with the Scrofula.  
With respect,  
MRS. N. WORMELL, Mistress

## VEGETINE

REV. O. T. WALKER, SAYS:

Providence, R. I., 164 Transit Street.  
H. H. Stevens, Esq.  
I feel bound to express with my signature the high value I place upon your VEGETINE. My family have used it for the last two years. In nervous debility it is invaluable, and I recommend it to all who may need an invigorating, renovating tonic.  
O. T. WALKER,  
Formerly Pastor of Bowdoin-square Church, Boston, Mass.

## VEGETINE.

NOTHING EQUAL TO IT.

South Salem, Mass., Nov. 14 1878.  
Mr. H. H. Stevens,  
Dear Sir,—I have been troubled with Scrofula, Canker, and Liver Complaint for three years.—Nothing ever did me any good until I commenced using the VEGETINE. I am now getting along first-rate, and still using the VEGETINE. I consider there is nothing equal to it for such complaints. Can heartily recommend it to every body. Yours truly,  
MRS. LIZZIE M. PACKARD,  
No. 16 Lagrange Street, South Salem, Mass.

## VEGETINE.

RECOMMEND IT HEARTILY.

South Boston.  
Mr. Stevens,  
Dear Sir,—I have taken several bottles of your VEGETINE, and am convinced it is a valuable remedy for Dyspepsia, Kidney Complaint and General Debility of the system. I can heartily recommend it to all sufferers from that complaint.  
Yours respectfully,  
MRS. MUNROE PARKER.

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Newport, Perry County, Pa.

ESTATE NOTICE.—Notice is hereby given that letters testamentary on the estate of Lydia A. Mader, late of Penn twp., Perry county, Pa., dec'd., have been granted to the undersigned, residing in same township.  
All persons indebted to said estate are requested to make immediate payment and those having claims to present them duly authenticated for settlement to  
L. J. HOLLAND,  
Executor.  
July 16, 1878—6tpd.

LADIES AND CHILDREN will find a splendid assortment of shoes at the one price store of F. Mortimer.